

NEWS RELEASE

THE LIBERTARIAN PARTY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 28, 1997

For additional information: Bill Winter, Director of Communications ♦ (202) 333-0008 Ext. 226

How politicians 'pickpocket the poor' to finance art for wealthy Americans

NEA should be abolished, Libertarians say

WASHINGTON, DC — Ever been to the New York Metropolitan Opera? Even if the answer is no, you *have* helped pay for the \$125 tickets.

That's because the National Endowment for the Arts subsidizes tickets for the bejeweled patrons who attend operas — and now the NEA is demanding even more money.

"Democrats and Republicans should quit bickering over the proper amount of art welfare, and abolish it instead," said Libertarian Party Chairman Steve Dasbach. "Politicians have no business forcing poor and middle-class taxpayers to subsidize entertainment for America's wealthy elite."

Specifically, Dasbach lambasted the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, which this week demanded another \$192 million for the NEA and two other arts agencies.

"Genuine creativity doesn't require a subsidy," Dasbach said. "Truly creative artists and musicians have built a \$37 billion entertainment industry fueled by purchases and voluntary contributions from consumers, not by forced taxation. Art subsidies don't give people what they want; it forces people to pay for what they *don't* want."

The NEA is struggling to regain some of the ground it lost in recent years when Republicans, angered by its funding of "blasphemous" and homoerotic artwork, cut its budget by 40%. Now a coalition of Democrats and some Republicans has vowed to preserve the art welfare agency.

"Libertarians believe the NEA is repugnant not because of the kind of artwork it funds, but because it funds any artwork at all," Dasbach said. "It's simply immoral for politicians to seize money from taxpayers to fund art that others are willing to enjoy — but unwilling to pay for."

Dasbach acknowledged that the agency's \$100 million budget consumes just a fraction of 1% of total federal spending.

"That's exactly why deserving artists should have no trouble getting money from private sources if the NEA were abolished," he said. In fact, corporations, individuals, and private foundations already donate more than \$9 billion annually to the arts.

"Americans have clearly mastered the art of generosity," Dasbach said. "The only thing NEA bureaucrats have mastered is the art of picking the pockets of taxpayers."

#